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PP RUEHWEB

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P 081608Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7612  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2030  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0736  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0950  
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2712  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1082  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4518  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1773  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1633  
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000505

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD;  
TREASURY FOR OASIA-JLEVINE; DEPT PASS USDA FOR FAS; USDOC  
FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC FOR  
3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN PROVINCE OF SAMANA PREPARES FOR TOURIST  
BOOM

11. (U) This cable is part of a series of reports on economic  
and political issues at the provincial level in the Dominican  
Republic.

SAMANA PREPARES FOR TOURIST BOOM  
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(U) Tourism is on the rise throughout the Dominican Republic,  
and the northeastern province of Samana -- with its sparkling  
white sand beaches and world-renowned whale-watching -- is  
well placed to take advantage of this trend. Authorities in  
the province expect tourism to take off with the January 2008  
completion of a new highway from Santo Domingo. The 66-mile  
highway is being privately constructed and carries guarantees  
from the Government. It will be operated by the firm  
Autopistas del Nordeste as a toll road and is expected to cut  
the travel time from the capital from four hours to two.

(U) A second infrastructure improvement is the February 2007  
opening of the \$80 million Catey International Airport, which  
is located in the western part of the province and can  
accommodate wide-body aircraft. The new airport represents a  
significant upgrade for the region, since previously most  
tourists arriving in the north of the country had to fly in  
to Puerto Plata, 100 miles from Samana.

(U) Overall, a key indicator of growth in the tourism  
industry is the number of hotel rooms in Samana, which is  
expected to triple in the next five years (to some 7,500).

DEVELOPMENT HAS ITS COST  
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(SBU) The mayor of the province's capital city, also called  
Samana, is Bruno Carrasco Kery. Young and quick to use

snappy sound bites, Carrasco is a descendent of a group of African-Americans who immigrated to Samana in 1824 and established an English-speaking community. The Mayor told POLOFF that he welcomes the increase in tourism and hopes that the new jobs and increased tax revenue will eventually transform his city. At the same time, he is acutely aware that "development has its cost." He cited an increased demand for prostitution and recreational drugs that he believes is related to the higher number of international visitors.

(SBU) Carrasco views education as the key to preparing his constituents for the tourist boom. He considers his office's school transportation service to be his signature program. The Mayor is actively engaging the central government authorities responsible for higher education. In this area there have been important recent advances. Until fairly recently, there were no universities in the area, so that students from Samana had to live and board in Santiago, 150 miles away from their families. However, two years ago, the Autonomous University for Adults opened in nearby Nagua and, just this month, the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo opened a branch in the same city.

(SBU) Senator Prim Pujols Nolasco, who represents Samana at the national level, is also active in the area of education. His office administers a university scholarship program for constituents. Another key concern for the Senator is the impact of narcotics trafficking on the province, which he believes has not only increased crime, but also "corrupted" his constituents. As an example, Pujols told POLOFF that on several recent occasions multi-kilogram packages of cocaine -- presumably coming from errant air drops -- have been found by low-income fisherman, who then face intense economic

temptation to sell the narcotics instead of turning it over to the authorities.

#### RISING CRIME - - - - -

(SBU) For Augustina Castillo, the District Attorney of Samana, the overall benefits of a growing tourism industry are a given. Even so, she described the new toll road from Santo Domingo to her region as an "open door for criminals." Castillo believes narcotics trafficking is on the rise, and she is concerned that the reforms of the legal system could leave her city unprepared to combat drug dealers and other criminals. The prosecutor supports the new Criminal Procedures Code, but said that the growing pains of the new system -- particularly the Code's requirement the police turn over the direction of investigations to prosecutors -- are still being felt in Samana.

- - Drafted by Peter Hemsch

12. (U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>  
HERTELL